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Message Text

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70
ACTION AF-18

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03

INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03

SS-20 USIA-15 ACDA-19 IO-14 AID-20 EB-11 IGA-02 AGR-20

TRSE-00 OMB-01 DRC-01 /209 W
---------- 125674
R 141857Z NOV 73
FM AMEMBASSY LONDON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5573
INFO AMEMBASSY NAIROBI

C O N F I D E N T I A L LONDON 13342

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, SE, US
SUBJECT: SEYCHELLES CONCERN ABOUT U.S. PRESENCE

1. SEYCHELLES CHIEF MINISTER JAMES MANCHAM STOPPED BY EMBASSY LONDON ON HIS RETURN TRIP FROM A CONFERENCE ON TOURISM IN MEXICO IN ORDER TO EXPRESS CERTAIN CONCERNS HE HAD ABOUT FUTURE OF U.S.-SEYCHELLES RELATIONS. HE HAD CALLED AT FCO TO DISCUSS UK AND US RELATIONS AND WAS REFERRED TO US ON LATTER. HIS CONCERN IS FOCUSED ON WHAT HE REGARDS AS A DETERIORATION OF THE PUBLIC RELATIONS ASPECT OF THE USAF TRACKING STATION OPERATION IN SEYCHELLES, EXACERBATED BY THE IMPENDING TERMINATION OF THE PL-480 SCHOOL LUNCH PROGRAM IN THE SEYCHELLES. THIS PROGRAM IS LOOKED UPON IN THE SEYCHELLES AS BEING PART OF THE "QUID" FOR SEYCHELLOIS PUBLIC ACCEPTANCE OF THE TRACKING STATION.
2. MANCHAM OUTLINED THE HISTORY OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE AMERICAN PERSONNEL AT THE STATION AND THE GENERAL POPULATION SINCE THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE TRACK-ING STATION IN 1966. HE SAID THAT IN THE EARLY DAYS THERE SEEMED TO BE A DETERMINED EFFORT ON THE PART OF THE AMERICANS TO CREATE A GOOD IMAGE AND HAPPY RELATIONS
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WITH THE PEOPLE. HOWEVER, OF LATE IT HAS APPEARED TO

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HIM AND TO THE PUBLIC AT LARGE THAT THE AMERICANS ARE TAKING THE SEYCHELLOIS FOR GRANTED. THERE HAVE BEEN NO SERIOUS INCIDENTS BUT NOTHING POSITIVE HAS BEEN DONE LATELY TO FOSTER GOOD RELATIONS BETWEEN THE AMERICANS AND THE POPULATION OF THE ISLANDS. MANCHAM SAID THAT CUTTING OFF THE PL-480 PROGRAM WOULD AFFECT SOME 8,600 PEOPLE, 4,500 OF THEM PRE-SCHOOL CHILDREN WHO DEPEND ALMOST ENTIRELY ON THE FOOD PROGRAM FOR THEIR LUNCHES AND SUPPLEMENTS TO THEIR DIET. WHEN PL-480 ENDS, THE FAMILIES WHO HAVE BENEFITED FROM IT WILL HAVE TO BUY ADDITIONAL FOOD AT VERY HIGH PRICES. TO MAKE THE PROBLEM WORSE, THE SEYCHELLES HAS UNTIL THIS YEAR DEPENDED ON THAILAND FOR ITS STAPLE FOOD SUPPLY, RICE, BUT THAILAND IS NOW UNABLE TO MEET THE SEYCHELLES REQUIREMENTS AND THEY HAVE BEEN FORCED TO BUY INFERIOR RICE FROM EGYPT AT THREE TIMES THE OLD PRICE.

3. THE PROBLEM FOR MANCHAM IS A POLITICAL ONE AS THE OPPOSITION, WHICH FAVORS INDEPENDENCE, IS NOW CALLING ATTENTION TO THE CHANGE IN THE AMERICAN ATTITUDE AND THE LOSS OF FOOD SUPPLIES. MANCHAM SAID IT WOULD BE BETTER FROM A POLITICAL POINT OF VIEW HAD WE NEVER ESTABLISHED THE PL-480 PROGRAM. THIS SITUATION IS WORSENED BY THE REALIZATION OF THE SEYCHELLOIS THAT THE WEALTHY AMERICANS PAY NO TAXES AND CAN IMPORT ANYTHING THEY WANT ON A DUTY FREE BASIS. ON A SMALL ISLAND, THIS DISPARITY BETWEEN LOCALS AND AMERICANS IS PAINFULLY OBVIOUS.

4. WHEN ASKED IF HE HAD TALKED TO ANY AMERICAN OFFICIALS IN THIS VEIN PREVIOUSLY, MANCHAM SAID THAT HE HAD NOT. HE HAD THOUGHT OF STOPPING BY WASHINGTON ON HIS WAY BACK FROM MEXICO BUT DECIDED THAT BECAUSE OF THE CURRENT PREOCCUPATIONS THERE, HE MIGHT NOT BE ABLE TO MAKE CONTACT WITH THE RIGHT PEOPLE. ALTHOUGH USAID OFFICER SHERMAN FROM NAIROBI HAS BEEN TO THE SEYCHELLES TO INFORM OFFICIALS OF THE TERMINATION OF THE PL-480 PROGRAM AT THE END OF THIS FISCAL YEAR, THERE HAVE BEEN NO DISCUSSIONS BETWEEN SEYCHELLOIS OFFICIALS AND EMBASSY NAIROBI OFFICERS CONCERNING THE POLITICAL IMPACT OF THIS ACTION. WE DESCRIBED TO MANCHAM REASONS WHY PL-480 HAD BEEN DRASTICALLY CURTAILED ON A WORLDWIDE BASIS. HE SEEMED TO APPRECIATE THIS POINT BUT WAS PLEADING FOR CONFIDENTIAL

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SOME SORT OF GESTURE FROM THE UNITED STATES WHICH WOULD ENABLE THE SEYCHELLES GOVERNMENT TO MAKE THE CONTINUED PRESENCE OF THE TRACKING STATION POLITICALLY ACCEPTABLE. WE PROMISED TO CONVEY HIS VIEWS TO WASHINGTON AND NAIROBI.

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